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# ERS NEWSLETTER

A Bimonthly Newsletter for Economic Research Service Employees and Colleagues

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
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Cities and agriculture coexist amicably in some areas, uneasily in others. What will the landscape of tomorrow look like?

## Land Use Data Workshop Being Organized

ERS, in cooperation with the Farm Foundation and the American Land Resources Association, is organizing a workshop on "Land Use Transition in Urbanizing Areas: Research and Information Needs," to be held in Washington, D.C., June 6-7. The workshop will focus on information and data needed to assess and guide land use changes in rapidly urbanizing areas. The workshop will include sessions on:

- Urbanization of Rural Land: Who Cares and Why?
- Impacts of Urbanization on Agriculture
- Empirical Evidence from Fast Population Growth Areas
- A Policy Forum: Information Needs in the Urbanization of Rural Land

## ■ Information for Evaluating Land Retention Programs

### ■ The Future of Agriculture Near Cities: Directions for Research

Data collected in ERS's latest study of the dynamics of land use change in fast growth areas will be discussed. Contact Ralph Heimlich (786-1419) or Marlow Vesterby (786-1422) for more information.

## Economic Data Users Speak Out

Nearly 100 users of USDA data met recently with representatives from ERS and USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service, Agricultural Marketing Service, World Agricultural Outlook Board, and Foreign Agricultural Service to talk about data needs at 2-day sessions in Des Moines, Denver, and Fort Worth. ERS participants included Robert Bohall, Kevin Bost, Anthony Grano, Ronald Gustafson, James Johnson, John Lee, Donald Seaborg, and Richard Stillman.

USDA programs were outlined on the first day. On the second day, USDA representatives listened to comments and data needs of participants from industry, universities, and government.

Recommended a few years ago by a blue ribbon panel on data appointed by the Secretary of Agriculture, these listening sessions now follow a 4-year cycle, emphasizing, in sequence, data needs on crops, livestock, fruits and vegetables, and farm inputs. This year the emphasis was on livestock.

Data users in each session spoke of needing not only more data on a timely basis but also easier access to USDA data. Suggestions were also received on the outlook and research programs of ERS.

## Social Science Agenda Shaped at Texas Workshop

Several ERS staff recently joined over 250 representatives from universities, foundations, agribusinesses, and other organizations to design an agenda for social science research and education on problems facing agriculture and rural America. The week-long workshop in Houston, Tex., was the second phase of the Social Science Agricultural Agenda Project.

The executive committee guiding the project includes ERS Administrator John Lee, Ed Rossmiller (National Center for Food and Agricultural Policy), and Glenn Johnson (Michigan State U.). The first phase brought 60 social scientists and administrators together at a workshop in Minnesota last June to begin to identify gaps in social science knowledge.

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# Current Research

## Wisconsin Farm Family Survey Completed

A recently completed farm family survey in southwestern Wisconsin shows that about 20 percent of those families who operated farms during 1982 have quit farming.

According to ERS researcher Susan Bentley (786-1931) and William Saupe and Brian Gould (U. of Wisconsin), about 80 percent of those who quit farming remained in the same community and over half in the same house they occupied while farming. Eight percent moved to adjacent counties, 7 percent moved elsewhere in Wisconsin, and 5 percent left the State. Sixty percent of the farm operators who left farming have jobs, although a third of those are only working part-time. Most of those without jobs are retired or disabled.

The recent survey (a followup to a 1983 ERS survey of the same 529 farm operators and their households) shows that, for those farm operators still farming, average household incomes had not changed. Income from farming was down, however, and off-farm jobs made up the difference. More farm operators and spouses were working off the farm, and working more hours in 1986 than in 1982. A third of the farm operators and half of the spouses and other adults worked off the farm, with 14.3 percent of the farm operators and 17.5 percent of the spouses working off the farm full time.

Average net cash farm income decreased by about \$2,200 between 1982 and 1986 to \$13,503. Off-farm income increased \$3,000, reaching \$10,418. Large dairy farms reported the least decrease in farm income and the least increase in off-farm income.

Off-farm earnings were highly correlated with workers' formal education. Farm operators and

spouses with less than 8 years of formal education earned less than half of the average wage of their counterparts with over 12 years of education. The average hourly wage for all farm operators surveyed was \$10.09. Spouses earned \$6.71. Workers with full-time off-farm jobs earned \$10.63.

## Consumer Demand for Dairy Products Studied

ERS economists Richard Haidacher (786-1862), James Blaylock, and Lester Myers recently completed a study for the National



*Rising consumer income and declining prices for dairy products helped per capita consumption of those products increase 2 percent annually during 1983-86.*

Commission on Dairy Policy that analyzes the upturn in the 1980's in the Nation's per capita consumption of dairy products. The study identifies and quantifies the major determinants of demand for dairy products. *Consumer Demand for Dairy Products* (AER-586) presents the findings of the study.

Rising consumer incomes and declining relative prices for dairy products caused most of the 2-percent average annual increase in per capita consumption and the 3-percent increase in total consumption posted during 1983-86. Advertising, concern about health and nutrition, changes in demographics, and Government donations also affected consumption. But these influences were small for most dairy products,

compared with the effects of changes in relative prices and consumer incomes.

## World Food Production Reaches Record High

World food production reached a record high in 1986, exceeding 1985 (the previous record) by about 1 percent, despite declines in Latin America, United States, Western Europe, and Oceania. World food production generally increased faster than population during 1977-86. During the same period, production of agricultural commodities, including nonfoods, increased at an annual compound rate of 2.3 percent. It was 0.7 percent on a per capita basis.

ERS economist Charles Goode (786-1717) coordinated the annual edition of *World Indices of Agricultural and Food Production* (SB-759), which contains indices of total and per capita food and agricultural production for 111 countries, 12 regions, and the world during 1977-86.

[The "Current Research" section is continued on page 4.]

## Economic Research Service

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## Administrator's Letter – *Producing Products That Make A Difference*

Research is an essential component of ERS's program. It complements other functions by providing the knowledge base for staff analyses and situation and outlook work. Research, in turn, benefits from the constituent feedback generated by staff work and situation and outlook. However, ERS's research program cannot be all things to all people; we have to allocate scarce resources among competing priorities.



USDA

Because of who we are and where we are, I believe that our research emphasis must be on issues and subjects of broad national policy significance. Moreover, our work should provide the kind of insight to issues and economic and social forces at work that fosters a better understanding of the consequences of prevailing and alternative policies and programs. In short, both markets and societies perform best if the distributions of costs and benefits of alternative courses of action are evident.

Policy-relevant research is difficult, risky, and fraught with methodological, theoretical, data, and "shoot-the-messenger" problems, to name a few. All institutions operate with some constraints and sensitivities, but ERS has always enjoyed wide program latitude and protection to engage in relevant and sensitive research. With skill, diplomacy, persistence, and appropriate sensitivity to the risks incurred by our providers of resources and protection, we can and do make progress toward the goal of a more informed policy constituency.

To illustrate that progress, here are four examples of research products that have made a difference:

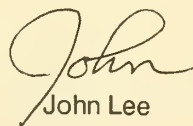
*Government Intervention in Agriculture* (FAER-229). This report changed the language of international agricultural trade negotiations and permanently altered the public's perception of the levelness of the playing field in global agricultural markets. The report and the response to it also have altered the agenda of agricultural trade researchers. The concepts in the report were not new, and similar work has been done elsewhere. But a group of ERS researchers made the commitment to conceptual refinement, data gathering, and analysis necessary to produce the right product at the right time.

*Rural Economic Development in the 1980's* (ERS Staff Report No. AGES870724). This report, prepared at the request of the Senate Appropriations Committee, has become both a basebook and bible to the resurgent rural development movement. It has spawned several conferences and served as a substantive base for our linkage with a wide range of constituencies. It has influenced thinking about the nature of rural problems and provided an intellectual framework for considering solutions.

*An Assessment of Marketing Loan Program Options* (AER-581). This report blunted the demand for implementing marketing loans for wheat and feed grains by demonstrating that other less costly policy tools are making prices for these commodities as competitive as marketing loans could. This timely, competent report dealt with a potentially sensitive subject in an objective, straightforward way. As a result, the report was used, and it made a difference.

*Ethanol: Economic and Policy Tradeoffs* (unnumbered). This report brought a factual, objective perspective to a controversial, advocacy-prone subject. The study behind the report was conducted in a manner to engender credibility with and support from all segments of the industries involved. It was thus possible to combine competent analysis with state-of-the-art information on technology and costs. Clearly, this report has contributed to a more informed and deliberative debate on alternative fuels.

These reports reflect one facet of ERS's multifaceted research program. Other aspects will be discussed in future newsletters. But the objective of all aspects of ERS's program is the same: to make a positive difference in the performance of agriculture and the rural economy.

  
John Lee

## Task Force Looks for Better Price Indicators for Beef

Three decades of change in the way beef is marketed have brought mounting concerns about the meaning and measurement of retail beef prices and price spread data (the difference between prices paid by consumers and received by



Changes in the way beef is marketed have caused ERS analysts to rethink the methods by which USDA reports beef prices.

farmers) that USDA has published for over 50 years. The changes include a shift to selling boxed beef instead of carcasses, more boneless cuts and closer fat trimming, increased emphasis on service (including prepared food and delicatessen sales), and the rising importance of eating out.

The resulting changes in the product mix of beef sold and the implications for price data were studied by an ERS task force and reported in an ERS staff report, *Issues and Options Related to the Reporting and Analysis of Retail Prices and Price Spreads for Beef* (AGES-871102). The report lays out seven options for future beef price reporting.

Contributing to the task force were ERS economists Terry Crawford (786-1710), Lawrence Duewer, John Ginzel, Harry Harp, Kenneth Nelson, and Paul Westcott. As an outgrowth of their work, ERS, is changing the carcass value in the price spreads it reports for Choice beef to a boxed-beef value and will publish an all-fresh beef retail price series.

## ERS-Cleveland State U. Study Examines Federal Aid to States

Through a cooperative agreement between ERS and Cleveland State U., nonmetro case studies were included in a Cleveland State U. study of the effects of changes in Federal aid on Ohio communities. The study covers general revenue sharing, community development block grants, and services for the elderly.

*Local Response to Federal Budget Policies: A Study of Nonmetropolitan Communities in Ohio*, will be published as an ERS staff report. ERS economist Richard Reeder (786-1544) is the ERS project leader.

## Economic Status of Sugar Beet Farms Profiled

Total cash income in 1984 for U.S. sugar beet farms was just over half the U.S. average for all farms. That fact and other data profiling the Nation's sugar beet producers are in a new report by ERS economists Annette Clauson (786-1890) and Frederic Hoff, *Structural and Financial Characteristics of U.S. Sugar Beet Farms* (AER-584).

Based on data from ERS's 1984 Farm Costs and Returns Survey, an average farm growing sugar beets had more debt than the average U.S. farm (\$281,547 versus \$251,845) but lower total cash income (\$12,810 versus \$22,918). A major reason for the lower total

income is that beet growers had less off-farm income than the U.S. average.

Production of beets is typically found on farms producing livestock and feed grains, mainly in Minnesota, North Dakota, California, Colorado, Nebraska, and Wyoming. Over 20 percent of all beet growers had farm sales of \$250,000 or more in 1984, compared with 6 percent of all U.S. farms.

## Food Cost Variations Studied

A USDA technical bulletin, *Food Cost Variations: Implications for the Food Stamp Program* (TB-1731), by former ERS economists Paul Nelson and James MacDonald sheds new light on supermarket price differences by kind and location of supermarket and explains differences among supermarkets in 10 large metropolitan areas. Major findings of the study are:

- within cities, supermarket prices typically vary by up to 7 percent, with extremes of up to 25 percent;
- price differences do not show any particular regional pattern, but supermarket prices vary more within regions and within metropolitan areas than among regions;



Differing retail prices and household purchase practices affect the actual benefits afforded to food stamp recipients.



■ central city stores have higher prices than suburban stores because of a clustering of high-cost stores with high insurance costs and difficult access for delivery;

■ within central cities, stores in low-income neighborhoods have lower prices than stores in higher income neighborhoods; and

■ warehouse stores, which have the lowest prices, apparently induce competing conventional supermarkets to lower their prices, on the average by 2 to 4 percent.

The report also compares actual food purchases by food stamp recipients with those recommended in USDA's Thrifty Food Plan. Food stamp households purchased more meat, fish, and sweets than recommended, and less cereals, fruits and vegetables, and dairy products.

## Options for Pricing Shell Eggs Explored

A new staff report edited by ERS economist Lee Christensen (786-1714) presents the views of egg industry, university, and Government representatives on ways to improve the discovery and reporting of shell egg prices.

*Shell Egg Price Discovery Symposium Proceedings* (AGES-880111) includes commentaries and a wrap-up by Christensen of a meeting last fall in Washington, D.C., sponsored by ERS and USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service.

The report highlights changes in the structure of the egg industry that have heightened the need for better ways to price shell eggs. The egg industry clearly favors pricing that more accurately reflects actual negotiated sales. Symposium participants stressed that improved pricing calls for broad and consistent communication among producers, buyers, and sellers of shell eggs.

## Personnel Notes

### Baum Is New RTD Assistant Director

Kenneth Baum is the new assistant director of ERS's Resources and Technology Division. He joined ERS's former National Economics Division (NED)



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in 1980, where he analyzed structural change in the farm sector. He also developed a farm firm simulation model (REPFARM) to study the effects of alternative agricultural, macroeconomic, and financial policies on representative farming situations.

From 1983 to 1986, Baum helped develop ERS's Farm Costs and Returns Survey and worked extensively with the National Agricultural Cost of Production Standards Review Board to redesign and reformulate USDA cost-of-production budgets. In 1986, he became chief of the Livestock, Dairy, and Poultry Branch in NED.

Baum taught agricultural production and farm management at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State U. during 1977-80, where he worked on a number of interdisciplinary projects, including integrated pest management, pest management practices, environmental policy, livestock, and agricultural finance. He has written and spoken widely on agricultural and financial policy issues, production and supply response,

agricultural sector data needs and problems, and agricultural sector and firm models.

Baum received a B.S. from Northwestern U., an M.A. from the U. of Chicago, and a Ph.D. from Iowa State U. He has received three ERS Administrator's Special Merit Awards for outstanding research, excellence in research, and program planning and development.

### Baumes Is New ATAD Branch Chief

Harry Baumes is the new chief, United States Agricultural Policy Branch, Agriculture and Trade Analysis Division.



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Prior to rejoining ERS, Baumes was with Wharton Econometrics and Forecasting Associates during 1981-87 as a senior service director. He was an agricultural economist with the Forecast Support Group in ERS's former Commodity Economics Division during 1978-79. During 1979/80-1980/81, he was a visiting professor at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State U., where he evaluated costs and benefits of pesticide use.

Baumes has experience in large-scale econometric and mathematical programming models for supply, demand, price, and policy analysis. He has presented papers at international fertilizer

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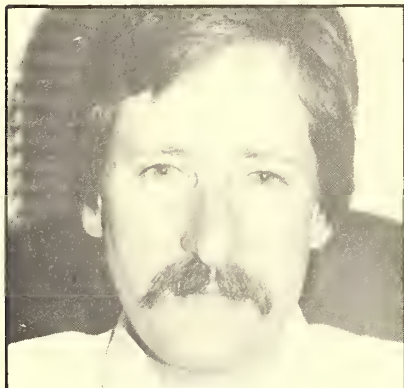
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conferences and numerous professional meetings.

Baumes received a B.S. in statistics from Cornell U. and an M.S. and Ph.D. in agricultural economics from Purdue U.

## Sears Is New ARED Section Leader

David Sears is the new leader, Government and Development Policy Section, Rural Business and



CAROLYN RILEY

Government Branch, Agriculture and Rural Economy Division.

Prior to joining ERS, Sears worked for 7 years at the U.S. Dept. of Housing and Urban Development studying housing and community development programs and issues. Prior to that, he was a policy analyst for human service programs in the former U.S. Dept. of Health, Education, and Welfare. He also has taught planning at the U. of Massachusetts (Amherst).

Sears has an A.B. in government, an M.S. in public administration, and a Ph.D. in city and regional planning, all from Cornell U.

## Evans Named CED Senior Economist

Samuel Evans is the new senior economist in the Crops Branch of ERS's Commodity Economics Division. He had been leader of the Fibers Analysis Section in the Crops Branch.



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Since joining ERS in 1975, Evans has written situation and outlook reports on wool, cotton, oil crops, and feed grains; served on an ERS team to develop improved forecasting tools; coauthored background reports on wheat and barley for the Food Security Act of 1985; and contributed to staff analyses of the farmer-owned reserve and, more recently, of mandatory supply controls.

Evans has a B.S. in economics and a Ph.D. in agricultural economics from Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State U. He received two ERS Administrator's special merit awards for his contributions to commodity analyses relating to the Food Security Act of 1985 and for the feed situation and outlook report team. Evans also received the American Agricultural Economics Association's Quality of Research Discovery Award for his publication on commodity supply response to farm programs.

## Highlights of Staff Activities

*ERS participation in meetings of the Southern Agricultural Economics Association and Southern Rural Sociological Association, Jan. 31 - Feb. 3, in New Orleans, La.:*

*Paper authors:* Carlos Arnade (2), Eldon Ball, Donald Bellamy, James Blaylock, Roger Conway, Cecil Davison, Michael Dicks (2), Praveen Dixit, James Duffield, Walter Ferguson, Gregory Gajewski, Linda Ghelfi, Stephen Haley, Richard Heifner, Linwood Hoffman, Wen Huang, Bengt Hyberg (3), Leif Jensen, Steven Koenig, Barry Krissoff (2), Michael LeBlanc, Hyunok Lee, Dale Leuck, William Lin, Richard Magleby, Keith Menzie, Elizabeth Morrissey, Mark Newman, Timothy Parker, Gerald Plato, Robert Reinsel, Vernon Roningen, Peggy Ross, Scott Sanford, Nancy Schwartz, Parveen Setia (visiting professor from the U. of Illinois), Jerry Sharples, Jerome Stam, John Sullivan, John Sutton, Philip Szmedra, John Wainio, Alan Webb, Leslie Whitener, Edwin Young, and James Zellner.

*Symposia organizers and moderators:* Lee Christensen, Michael Dicks, Richard Fallert, Walter Ferguson, and John Sutton.

*Panel participants:* Carolyn Betts, Lee Christensen, Kenneth Clayton, Michael Dicks, Walter Ferguson, Linda Lee, Clayton Ogg, and Philip Szmedra.

*Session presenter:* John Lee.

*Session presidents:* Keith Collins, Linda Ghelfi, Max Jordan, Gene Mathia, John McClelland, Mark Newman, Susan Offutt, Peggy Ross (3), and Leslie Whitener.



## *Agriculture and Rural Economy Division*

**David Harrington** participated in a symposium on social science research in the agricultural experiment stations, sponsored by the Central Committee on Social Science Research Priorities, in Rosslyn, Va. • **Elliot Dubin** and **Norman Reid** participated in a National Governors Association meeting in Washington, D.C. • **Sherman Robinson** (visiting professor from the U. of California, Berkeley) presented a seminar on general equilibrium modeling work being done in ERS, at the Brookings Institution • **Peggy Ross** was elected president of the Southern Rural Sociological Association for 1988/89 • and **Clifford Rossi** and **Gregory Gajewski** presented a paper, "Tax Reform Impacts on Agricultural and Rural Banks," at an Allied Social Science Associations meeting in Chicago, Ill.

## *Agriculture and Trade Analysis Division*

**Timothy Baxter**, **William Kost**, and **Tim Wilson** participated in a Project LINK meeting at the United Nations, in New York, N.Y. • and **Kost** also presented a paper on "Issues in the Management of Models" and chaired a session at an international economic modeling conference, in London, U.K.

## *Commodity Economics Division*

**Nicole Ballenger** and **Carl Mabbs-Zeno** (ATAD) presented a paper, "The Political Economy of Agricultural Trade Liberalization in the Populous Oil-Exporting Countries," at an Allied Social Science Associations meeting in Chicago, Ill. • **Robert Barry** spoke on future U.S. sugar imports, at an American Farm Bureau Federation meeting in New Orleans, La. • **Robert Bishop** participated in a Midwest Poultry Federation

Convention in Minneapolis, Minn.

• **Kevin Bost** met with wholesale meat brokers and livestock futures analysts on ways to improve pork industry and outlook information flows, in Austin, Minn., and Chicago, Ill. • **Lee Christensen** participated in the Canadian Agricultural Outlook Conference in Ottawa, Canada • **Christensen** also presented a paper on the economic outlook for the poultry industry at a poultry conference in Columbus, Ohio • **Richard Fallert** reported on the results of an ERS study on bovine somatotropin (bST) at a dairy and food industry conference in Columbus, Ohio • **Richard Haidacher** and **Kenneth Nelson** participated in a livestock pricing issues conference sponsored by the Research Institute on Livestock Pricing, in Denver, Colo. • **Rosanna Morrison** presented a paper on the economic prospects for food irradiation at a USDA Extension Service seminar in Lexington, N.C. • **Lester Myers** met with a North-Central regional research committee on implications of world food developments for U.S. agricultural policies, in Indianapolis, Ind. • **Patrick O'Brien** spoke to Washington State U. agricultural leaders and Illinois Farm Bureau members on the effects of the Food Security Act of 1985 on major commodity markets, in Washington, D.C. • **Tanya Roberts** chaired a session and presented two papers on foodborne disease and irradiation at a conference on the use of food irradiators in developing countries, sponsored by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and International Atomic Energy Agency, in Dakar, Senegal • **Richard Stillman** discussed implications of proposed trade legislation provisions at a meeting of the National Wool Growers Association in San Antonio, Tex. • **Ronald Trostle** presented a paper on the global agricultural outlook and food aid issues at a Winrock International conference in Morrilton, Ark. • **Mark**

**Weimar** met with the Argentine Ambassador to the United States on the potential for Argentine exports of egg products to the United States, in Washington, D.C. • **Weimar** and **Ronald Gustafson** were interviewed by Medill News Service on changing meat consumption patterns, in Washington, D.C. • and **James Zellner** presented a paper on "Advertising: Impacts on Food Industry Structure, Conduct, and Performance" at an Allied Social Science Associations meeting in Chicago, Ill.

## *Resources and Technology Division*

**William Anderson** participated in an American Law-American Bar Association study course on environmental law, in Washington, D.C. • **Kenneth Baum** and **Cheryl Christensen** participated in an U.S. Environmental Protection Agency workshop on world agriculture and the possible effects of climate changes over the next century, in Washington, D.C. • **Christensen** also participated in a meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, in Boston, Mass. • **Roger Conway** and **John McClelland** presented papers, and **Hyunok Lee** was a discussant at an Economic Dynamics and Control Conference in Tempe, Ariz. • **Steven Crutchfield**, **Susan Offutt**, and **Katherine Reichelderfer** presented papers, and **John Miranowski** and **Edwin Young** participated in a meeting of the Consortium for Research on Crop Production Systems, in Airlie, Va. • **Stan Daberkow** and **John Miranowski** participated in a planning meeting for a conference on farm machinery distribution systems for the 21st century, in Columbus, Ohio • **Daberkow** also gave a briefing on the U.S. agricultural input manufacturing system to World Bank staff and a delegation from the People's

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Republic of China, in Washington, D.C. • **Miranowski** also participated in a forum on environmental policy at an American Soybean Association meeting in Washington, D.C. • **John Day** participated in a symposium on plants under stress, at Lancaster U., U.K. • **Ralph Heimlich** presented a seminar on wetlands conversion and the swampbuster provisions of the Food Security Act of 1985 to an U.S. Environmental Protection Agency interest group on agriculture and environment, in Washington, D.C. • **Donald Negri** presented a paper on " 'Stragedy' of the Commons" at

an Allied Social Science Associations meeting in Chicago, Ill. • **Susan Offutt** presented a seminar on evaluating agricultural technologies, at Rutgers U. • **Offutt** also was selected to serve on the Biotechnology Socio-Economic Subcommittee of the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges • **Clayton Ogg** will represent ERS on the USDA Water Issues Working Group, which will address USDA water quality implementation strategies • **Katherine Reichelderfer** was a panelist for a USDA-State Cooperative Extension Service planning conference on alternative agricultural opportunities and competitiveness and profitability of

American agriculture, in St. Louis, Mo. • **Marc Ribaud** presented a paper on offsite water quality benefits at a conference on the conservation title of the Food Security Act of 1985, in Washington, D.C. • **Philip Szmedra** presented a paper, "Adaptive Economics and the Technology Adoption Process: Avoiding the Burden of Perfect Perception Under Maximization," at an Eastern Economic Association meeting in Boston, Mass., and • **Shwu-Eng Webb** presented a paper, "Water Management and Conservation in Western Agriculture," at a Western regional research committee meeting in San Diego, Calif.